



Ruby-Horsethief Permit System FAQs

Why will permits be required for the Ruby-Horsethief Canyons?

This permit system is being implemented to manage visitor use and protect resources. Use of the Colorado River between Loma and Westwater, called the Ruby-Horsethief stretch, has increased dramatically over the past decade. This camping permit system ensures boaters hoping to camp overnight know before they launch whether they have a camping site, which will reduce conflicts over campsites. It also ensures camping will occur in approved areas, which will reduce impacts to sensitive areas.

Who needs a permit for Ruby-Horsethief?

You will need a camping permit to camp overnight on Ruby-Horsethief between May 1 and Sept. 30. Camping will now only be allowed in 35 designated camping areas.

Also, unlimited, free permits are required for day-use and motorized-use.

Is there a fee for the permits?

No fees will be required for the 2012 season. Beginning in 2013, fees will likely be required for the camping permits only and will be based on group size. The day-use and motorized-use permits will continue to be free.

How do I get a permit?

Camping permits for Friday and Saturday nights will be issued first come, first served by the Grand Junction Field Office Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to noon. A dedicated phone number for the permit system will be published clearly online. You may also come by in person, 2815 H Road in Grand Junction.

You can obtain your weekend camping permit beginning the Monday 60 days before the weekend of use. Permits will be issued to a trip leader and an alternate trip leader.

Permits for camping Sunday through Thursday nights, day-use, and motorized-use will be self-issued at the Loma boat launch.

Can I get my permit on-line or through e-mail?

At this time permits are not available on-line, although BLM may develop an on-line system for future seasons.

How do I get more information about the permits and camping areas?

Specific details about the permit system are available by logging onto

<http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/nca/mcnca/recreation/Boating.html>, by emailing rubyhorsethief@blm.gov, or by calling 970 244-3000.

Between May 1 and Sept. 30, a weekend permit availability calendar will be posted to the GJFO website each afternoon, Monday through Friday. Available weekday campsites will not be updated online.

Where can I camp?

BLM will have 35 designated camp sites along this stretch. Camping is only allowed in these designated sites.

Can I bring my dog?

Dogs will be limited to two per camp group and count towards the overall group size

How are camping permits allocated among private boaters and commercial rafting outfitters?

Of the 35 designated camps, 29 (83 percent) will be available for private boaters, and six (17 percent) will be available for the outfitted public. The campsites available to outfitters will rotate; outfitters will not always have access to the same camps. Commercial camps will be allocated ahead of the permit season, and there will be penalties for reserving camps but not using them.

Why does the BLM allow commercial rafting outfitters to use this stretch of river?

Commercial outfitters provide the opportunity for visitors who may lack experience and equipment to get onto the river and enjoy their public lands. The BLM is interested in maintaining a cadre of committed and responsive outfitters who provide visitors with a variety of opportunities, from canoe rentals to fully supported raft trips that provide opportunities to hike the canyons from the river. Many of these outfitters also offer an educational component to their trips, which can foster environmental stewardship and enhance awareness and conservation of the sensitive resources that exist on public lands.

In return for the privilege of operating on the public lands, commercial outfitters return 3 percent of their gross receipts to BLM. These fees are put back into management of the area.

Why didn't BLM limit the number of people that could use the area at any one time?

The number of designated campsites is limited, as is group size. The permit system will give BLM a more accurate picture of the amount of use that is occurring, which would be needed to set a true capacity. Over the next three years, permit data will be used to consider capacity, which would allow the BLM to establish an upper ceiling for camping use on any given night (which some commenters suggested). These data would also allow the BLM to consider the commercial-private split and the mix of campsites that would be necessary to provide for use as desired by the public.

Why isn't day use or motorized use being limited as part of this project?

The permit system was designed to reduce impacts—both to the social setting (e.g., conflict among visitors) and to the physical/natural setting (damage to cultural resources, expansion of camping areas in sensitive riparian areas). At this point, our data suggest that the primary impacts are associated with camping, not with day use. Requiring day users to have a free, self-issued permit will provide the BLM with data to track this use over time.

What if I want to combine a Ruby-Horsethief and Westwater trip?

The Ruby-Horsethief weekend camping permits become available at the same time as they do for Westwater. This was done to allow people to plan a combined trip. .

Campsites are typically available for weekday trips through Ruby, and visitors will likely be able to obtain a campsite by signing in at Loma if launching on a weekday.

What if my planned trip includes both weekday and weekend camping?

Provide dates for your entire trip when you call in for the weekend dates. You will still select and sign up for your weekday (e.g., Sun-Thurs) camping nights at Loma, but your permit will reflect the total planned number of nights. In other words, you will not need to obtain two permits.

What if I miss my assigned campsite?

If you miss your assigned campsite, you should proceed to May Flat and camp there, which is downstream of Black Rocks. You may not select another campsite.

What specific rules are in place for Ruby Horsethief?

In addition to the required permits,

- Fire pans and portable human waste containment systems continue to be required and must be used (plan to have both these pieces of equipment with you when you launch, even if you don't think you will have a fire)
- Fires must be completely contained in a fire plan and fire ashes and debris must be removed. Don't burn items containing glass, nails, paint or other foreign materials.
- All wood used for fires must be brought into the river corridor. Live, dead, and down wood may not be collected to burn.
- Group size limit of 25 for private groups, 25 plus guides for commercial groups
- Dogs must be controlled in all areas (typically by voice or leash) and leashed in high-use areas (such as the Loma and Westwater launches)
- Dog waste must be collected and disposed of in the human waste containment system.
- At certain times of the year, fire bans may be in effect-check before you go
- Firearms may not be discharged except in the legally licensed pursuit of game. Target shooting and paintball are not allowed in the NCA

- Do not collect or disturb rocks, minerals, fossils, chipped rocks, arrowheads, or other paleontological, prehistoric or historical artifacts.

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